

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 IO-10 /082 W

----- 122506

R 221110Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2231

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

CINCPAC

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, MOPS, LA

SUBJECT: LPF HOLD PRESS CONFERENCE TO PROTEST VIENTIANE SIDE'S
"SUPPRESSION" OF DEMONSTRATION IN THAKHEK

1. LAO PATRIOTIC FRONT SENIOR REPRESENTATIVE IN VIENTIANE, SANAN SOUTHICHAK, CALLED PRESS CONFERENCE JANUARY 21 TO PROTEST VIENTIANE SIDE'S USE OF FORCE TO SETTLE RECENT DEMONSTRATIONS IN THAKHEK. SANAN SAID THAT DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS OF PEOPLE HAD BEEN VIOLATED AND HE WOULD HAVE PREFERRED TO SEE THAKHEK SITUATION RESOLVED ALONG LINES OF RECENT SETTLEMENTS IN BAN HOUEI SAI AND PAKSE. HE ACCUSED VIENTIANE SIDE OF TRYING TO MINIMIZE GRAVITY OF THE SITUATION SO AS TO PREVENT REPRESENTATIVES OF THE JOINT CENTRAL COMMISSION TO IMPLEMENT THE AGREEMENT FROM BECOMING INVOLVED IN THE MATTER. SANAN SAID VIENTIANE SIDE WOULD BEAR RESPONSIBILITY FOR ANY FURTHER VIOLENCE IN THAKHEK/NONG BOK AREA.

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2. DURING QUESTION-AND-ANSWER PERIOD, SANAN SAID THAT

LPF FORCES IN THE THAKHEK AREA WOULD NOT INTERFERE DIRECTLY SHOULD ANOTHER CONFRONTATION OCCUR THERE, ALTHOUGH LPF RESPONSE WOULD DEPEND ON NATURE OF CONFRONTATION. ASKED WHETHER LPF WOULD PERMIT JCCIA REPS TO INVESTIGATE HYPOTHETICAL DEMONSTRATIONS IN LPF ZONE, SANAN AVOIDED DIRECT NEGATIVE REPLY AND SAID LPF WOULD HAVE TO REFER TO TERMS OF VIENTIANE AGREEMENT REGARDING JCCIA'S COMPETENCE.

3. ASKED WHETHER SOTH PHETRASY'S TRIP TO AUSTRALIA HAD BEEN CANCELLED AS A RESULT OF THE DEAN/SHARMAN CASE, SANAN AGAIN AVOIDED DIRECT ANSWER. HOWEVER, HE SAID LPF HAD SENT CABLES TO SAM NEUA CONCERNING WHEREABOUTS OF DEAN/SHARMAN, BUT REPLIES HAD BEEN NEGATIVE. HE ADDED THAT DEAN AND SHARMAN ARE NOT REGARDED AS "ENEMIES" AND THAT LPF WILL KEEP LOOKING FOR THEM AND WILL KEEP INTERESTED PERSONS AND EMBASSIES INFORMED.

4. ASKED ABOUT SOVIET AN-2 CRASH NEAR SAM NEUA ON JANUARY 16, SANAN SAID PLANE WAS CARRYING MEDICAL PATIENTS FROM VIENTIANE TO VIENG SAY AND CRASHED IN BAD WEATHER, KILLING 12 PASSENGERS (8 LAO AND 4 RUSSIANS). HE SAID ONE OF THE CASUALTIES WAS (MAHA) THONGSAY, CHEF DE CABINET AT THE MINISTRY OF RELIGION.

5. MORNING SAME DAY, SECSTATE FOR FINANCE BOUTSABONG SOUVANNAVONG (LPF) MET WITH DCM AND ACTING USAID DIRECTOR RAMSEY. AFTER DISCUSSING VARIOUS AID MATTERS, BOUTSABONG BROUGHT UP "NEW TOPIC." HE WONDERED WHETHER USG COULD NOT HELP IN INFLUENCING VIENTIANE SIDE TO DEAL WITH SUCH PROBLEMS AS THAT IN THAKHEK IN A PEACEFUL MANNER. HE BELIEVED THAT RECENT INCIDENTS AND DEMONSTRATIONS AT BAN HOU EI SAI, VIENTIANE AND THAKHEK WERE SPONTANEOUS EXPRESSIONS OF DISCONTENT ON THE PART OF THE PEOPLE. IT WAS PATHET LAO DESIRE TO HAVE ALL SUCH EVENTS SETTLED PEACEFULLY. HE THOUGHT, AND THIS WAS HIS OWN PERSONAL VIEW HE SAID, THAT USG COULD PERHAPS CONVINCE THE "RIGHTIST GENERALS" TO SETTLE THESE DISRUPTIONS IN A JUST AND PEACEFUL WAY. AT THIS VERY TIME, HE AVERRED, THE FAR WAS THREATENING TO SEND ARMORED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CARS AND ARTILLERY AGAAINST BAN NONG BOK. DCM SAID HE RECOGNIZED MR. BOUTSABONG'S DESCRIPTION OF THE SITUATION AS ONE WAY TO LOOK AT IT BUT THERE WERE OTHERS IN VIENTIANE SIDE ZONE WHO FELT THAT THESE PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS WERE NOT ENTIRELY SPONTANEOUS. IN FACT, OTHERS BELIEVED THAT THERE WAS A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF ORGANIZATION BEHIND THEM. FOR INSTANCE, IN RECENT BAN HOU EI SAI INCIDENT, WE KNEW THAT STUDENTS WHO WERE

NOT REALLY STUDENTS HAD BEEN ACTIVE FOR SOME WEEKS PRIOR TO THE EVENT AND THAT THE PL FORCES PARTICIPATED IN THE OCCUPATION OF THE CITY. BOUTSABONG DID NOT DENY PRESENCE OF LPF SOLDIERS BUT SAID THAT THEIR ONLY PURPOSE FOR BEING THERE WAS TO HELP KEEP THINGS CALM SO THAT THE SITUATION COULD BE SETTLED IN A PEACEFUL MANNER.

6. BANGKOK POST OF JANUARY 21 CARRIED BRIEF REUTERS DISPATCH REPORTING THAT "TROOPS SUPPORTED BY THREE TANKS" WERE HEADING TOWARDS BAN NONG BOK TO DEAL WITH THE PROTEST THERE. THIS REPORT WAS BASED ON JANUARY 20 STATEMENT BY SENGKHAM VONGVORARATH, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE "21 ORGANIZATIONS" (OFFICIALLY, THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR REESTABLISHMENT OF PEACE AND NATIONAL RECONCILIATION), WHO IS QUOTED AS SAYING FURTHER THAT THE VIENTIANE TROOPS INTENDED TO "SUPPRESS THE MOVEMENT."

7. COMMENT: LPF HAS CLEARLY SEIZED UPON EVENTS OF THAKHEK TO RALLY PUBLIC OPINION AGAINST THE FAR AND THEREBY SEEK TO FURTHER WEAKEN THE VIENTIANE SIDE. MOREOVER, LPF MAY BE DISAPPOINTED THAT THEY HAVE NOT HAD SAME SUCCESS IN THAKHEK AS THEY HAD IN BAN HOUET SAI AND ARE SEEKING TO MAINTAIN THE PRESSURE. WHITEHOUSE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS, PRESS CONFERENCES, COMBAT OPERATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 JAN 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975VIENTI00494
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750024-0309
From: VIENTIANE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750128/aaaaayvh.tel
Line Count: 139
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 11 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <11 JUN 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <12 JUN 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LPF HOLD PRESS CONFERENCE TO PROTEST VIENTIANE SIDE'S "SUPPRESSION" OF DEMONSTRATION IN THAKHEK
TAGS: PINS, MOPS, LA, LPF, (SANAN SOUTHCHAK)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006